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**PRESS AVAILABILITY**

**Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice  
And Romanian President Traian Basescu**

**December 6, 2005  
Bucharest, Romania**

**PRESIDENT BASESCU:** (In Romanian.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. We had a very constructive discussion on a wide range of issues. I first want to say that I'm delighted to be here to sign this historic military access agreement. It is a remarkable thing to think that some 16 years after the collapse of communism here in Romania, an eventful period in which Romania has become a strong ally within NATO, that we would be signing an agreement that will allow America to have forces here on Romanian soil for training and for the use of those -- that access. And I just want to thank you very much for the hard work and the hard work that your team has put in to make this agreement a reality. And so I look forward to signing the agreement.

The last time that I was in Bucharest, I was here with President Bush when he gave the speech in the square and we all remember that what was a cold and gray and rainy day suddenly became a day with a rainbow and we have all since that day expect the belief that this was a symbol of a burgeoning and brightening relationship between Romania and the United States. And everything since that day has demonstrated indeed that Romania is one of our strongest friends, a friend with whom we share common values, a friend with whom we share a belief that those who are fortunate enough now to be on the right side of history's divide in terms of liberty and freedom have an obligation to those who are on the other side of the divide and have not yet had the blessings of liberty and freedom, that we have an obligation to them to extend those blessings.

And it is therefore fitting that the United States and Romania are not just friends, that indeed that our forces are brothers and sisters in arms in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the Balkans. I especially would like to take a moment to thank the Romanian people for their sacrifice and to the families of Romanian soldiers who are serving with us in difficult and dangerous places, to thank them for the sacrifice and for the commitment because there is no stronger commitment that one can make to the future of new democracies like Iraq and Afghanistan than to be willing to put one's people in harm's way so that the blessings of liberty can be secured.

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Mr. President, we have had an opportunity to talk about a wide range of issues. We share an interest in the development of this region, the development of the Black Sea region and in good relations among all neighbors. Tomorrow I will be with the Romanian Foreign Minister at NATO and I'm sure that we will have further discussions of the many challenges that we face. But whatever challenges come in this historic period, whatever challenges come in this time of testing for nations of the free world, we know that we have a great and committed partner in Romania which is willing to make the sacrifices and to make the commitments that are necessary to spread liberty and freedom and to make it a more peaceful and stable world.

Thank you very much.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) from now on because of this American military presence?

**PRESIDENT BASESCU:** (In Romanian.)

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, is Romania reevaluating its troop presence in Iraq or are you committed to staying there for the duration?

And Madame Secretary, have you given any examples to European leaders today of where renditions have actually saved lives, as you've told us? And if you haven't, are you concerned about whether they will accept your argument regarding this matter?

**PRESIDENT BASESCU:** (In Romanian.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** First of all, I've had discussions with our allies about the importance of our intelligence activities in taking terrorists off the streets. Let's remember that you can't prevent an attack if you don't know about it, and so intelligence is the only way that you know about an attack before one is actually to take place.

I have said before I have faced an inquiry about whether or not all was done that could have been done, and what we know from that inquiry is that we were not able to mobilize the intelligence that we needed inside and outside of the country to prevent the attacks of September 11th. Perhaps it wasn't possible to prevent them, but we know that we put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of intelligence in doing precisely that.

Now, as to renditions, I think it's probably a good argument that having Ramzi Youssef off the streets saved lives, given his history and given what he has plotted and planned. And so I feel quite confident in the argument that I have made to our -- my colleagues publicly through the statement that I made yesterday that we -- that taking terrorists off the streets, not simply releasing them back into the general population, making certain that you use every lawful means to capture them and to interrogate them and to make certain that you're getting the information that you need, that that is a practice that saves

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lives. I know this business well enough to know that without doing those things and without gathering intelligence, you're not going to save lives.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) for Madame Rice. What was the strongest argument that convinced the United States to sign this treaty? Was it a political one or a geostrategical one? And why did you sign this treaty with Romania and not with Bulgaria, for instance?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, with Romania we have a particularly close relationship, a military relationship that is playing out in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We have very good relations also with Bulgaria, a NATO ally. But the President and President Bush talked about the possibility of doing this. Both geographically it makes sense for the United States and in terms of what we have been doing with Romania in terms of military training. I know that Romania takes particularly good advantage of our International Military Training Program and sends a lot of officers to the United States.

But I said to the President that I thought that Romania has made a commitment to the transformation of its military, to the strengthening of its military, to technological capabilities to getting real capacity in the Romanian military to be able to do the kinds of military activities that Romania is engaged in in Afghanistan and in Iraq and in the Balkans. And that is perhaps a recognition as well that this is a very close relationship where our military capabilities can help around the world, not just in the region but around the world, because of the commitment that Romania has made.

We will be at NATO tomorrow and in the future, actually on Thursday and in the future, talking about the need of NATO to transform its forces, to make the commitment of resources that is needed to put real military capability in the hands of the alliance to be able to meet the challenges that we face. And I think increasingly Romania is demonstrating that it is one of the most active countries in doing precisely that.

**MODERATOR:** The final question to Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post*.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, I know you never talk about intelligence matters --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Right. Good lead-in, Glenn. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** I'm anticipating the answer. (Laughter.) But the base in this agreement has been cited as a potential detention center by Human Rights Watch in a letter to the Council of Europe and ABC News last night reported that detainees were moved before your arrival here in Europe. Can you reassure the American public that this base has never been used for any sort of detentions?

And for the President, as an incoming or a hopeful member of the EU, are you concerned about the reports of secret CIA prisons wherever they may be?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Glenn, first of all, this defense agreement is transparent. It will be debated, I am certain, in the parliament. It will be clear for everyone to see that this is

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a base where we intend to keep access for training and to enhance our capabilities and Romania's capabilities to be able to do the sorts of activities that we're doing together in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

I've spoken earlier to the reports about activities, but I've said and I will say again that I am not going to talk about whether such activities take place because to do so would clearly be to get into a realm of discussion about supposed or purported intelligence activities, and I just simply won't do that.

**PRESIDENT BASESCU:** (In Romanian.)

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